

Rhino Creates Russian Buzz For Beeline

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Rhino Creative Director Natasha Saenko crafted a unique cast of animated animals from scratch in stylized CG for the largest Russian telecommunications company Beeline. The prominent company sought out Rhino to develop a completely original concept, impressed by the studio's extensive animation and photorealistic VFX, specifically a recent series of Kleenex webisodes directed by Harry Dorrington. Saenko's fluency in creating and animating, a completely original cast of Russian-speaking characters in a :40 spot dominated by music is typical of the flexibility, diversity and versatility that defines Rhino.

The spot highlights Beeline's individual ringtones and the instant transformative effects of a positive phone call. Privet stars groups of stylized anthropomorphic sloths, meerkats and crocodiles who sit, bored, whiling the day away. A spontaneous phone call to their mutual friend, a gregarious beat-boxing frog, instantly enlivens the mood as he enters in a corner of the screen with his energetic, arm-flailing antics, setting the other animals dancing.



Character development provided a challenge on many levels. Beeline provided the basic color palate and character sketches, leaving it up to Rhino to develop the overall concept and the specific actors that would fit into the Beeline brand. Saenko proposed her cast of walking, talking animals to Beeline and then enlisted their creatives to help conceive the characters' personalities, asking them to imagine they were casting for a live-action project to settle on prototypes, which resulted in a crocodile modeled after James Brown and meerkats who moved like hip-hop dancers.

To perfect the animation, Saenko and the animation team studied humans in motion to mimic their actions or emotions, like fear or elation. Each animal had to be specially designed so that their movements and personality synched with their individual music, which Rhino also helped develop. The team worked in Maya, composited the characters in Flame, and delivered in Pal, collaborating closely with Beeline at each step.

"We had a lot of fun with this spot," noted Saenko. "The characters are funny and the animation is really beautiful. This is a very expressive, enticing piece, with animals that are genuinely cute and whimsical. The constant brainstorming and exchange of ideas between our animators and the agency creatives was incredibly smooth and productive."



Rhino has recruited an incredibly diverse roster which is nearly always suited for projects in multiple ways. Their latest project exemplifies this, as Saenko, a Russian native who understands both the culture and the look and feel of the market, made a perfect fit with Beeline's primarily Russian-speaking team.

"Natasha is bringing some really exciting changes to Rhino. Her work is unique: design-oriented and sexy with gorgeous lighting. She has a great aesthetic and a wonderful understanding of how to create atmosphere with animation," noted Rhino Managing Director Rick Wagonheim. "It's due to talent like Natasha that we've been able to sustain a hectic year, when the whole production world has been in flux. Rhino is like a Swiss Army knife - a varied group with multiple capabilities that can adapt to any situation. This spot is another example of that talent stretching their ability, delivering a piece that exceeds the typical experience, firming up our reputation as a creative shop that also creates solid content."

About Rhino:

Since its launch in 2000, Rhino has created award-winning visual effects, design, and animation for commercials, VFX for feature films, episodic television, webisodic mini-series, and videogame cinematics. The company's principals and artists have also led the industry's exploration into the boundless potential of branded digital content. By cultivating extensive relationships with key brands, advertising agencies, and film/TV studios, Rhino utilizes its creative directors and artists to develop and execute powerful branded entertainment to build both identity and awareness.



CREDITS

Client: Beeline
Spot Title: Privet
Air Date: January 2010

Agency: Lowe Adventa
Contact: Maria Veretennikova

Production Company: Just Us
Creative Director: Maria Molchanova
Art Director: Olya Diyakova
Producer: Anton Zamakhin

CG Production Company: Rhino
Director: Natasha Saenko
Animator/Rigger: Goran Ognjanovic, Rob Dollase
Animator: Jaime A. Castañeda, Sean Curran
Lead Lighter: Rob Pearson
Lighter: Yuheng Chiang, Gilad Kenan
Modeler: Jagammay Himamshu, Brian Dinoto
Flame Composite Artist: Micky Gorenstein
Production Coordinator: Cynthia Angel
Head of Production/Producer: Karen Bianca Bisignano
COO/Executive Producer: Camille Geier
Managing Director: Rick Wagonheim
CEO: Zviah Eldar

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